

A Guide to

Foreign Research Reactor Spent Fuel



The Environmental Health Center

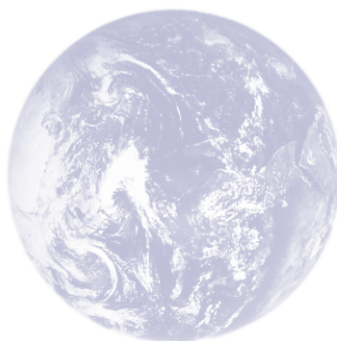
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Preface

More than four decades ago, under the Atoms for Peace Program, the United States agreed to supply enriched uranium and nuclear research reactor technology to nations that agreed not to produce nuclear weapons. The purpose of the program was to promote peaceful applications of nuclear energy and to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

As part of the program, the United States agreed to take back used, or spent, fuel containing U.S.-supplied uranium from participating nations. By taking possession of the highly radioactive spent fuel, the United States intended to ensure that the fuel would not be reprocessed to produce nuclear weapons.

In 1996, the United States adopted a new program for taking back spent fuel from foreign research reactors. The U.S. Department of Energy is responsible for managing and storing the spent fuel upon its return to the United States.

Under the new program, which lasts until May 2009, foreign research reactor spent fuel from countries other than Canada will enter the United States at either the Charleston Naval Weapons Station, in South Carolina, or the Concord Naval Weapons Station, in California. From there, the spent fuel will be transported to a Department of Energy facility for storage—either the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory or the Savannah River Site.

This guide is designed to be a resource for anyone seeking information about the current U.S. foreign research reactor spent fuel program and how the spent fuel is to be transported, handled, safeguarded, and stored when it arrives in the United States.

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